

FICTION AND AUTOBIOGRAPHY: A STUDY OF JOSEPH CONRAD'S HEART OF DARKNESS AND JAMES JOYCE'S A PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A YOUNG MAN

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ABSTRACT

Although Heart of Darkness is an earlier modernist novel than A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, both novels incorporate autobiographical elements which project the authors' traumatic experiences with the nihilistic practices in their societies. This paper examines fiction and autobiography with reference to Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness and James Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man with the aim of illustrating that these authors integrate personal life experiences in their fictional works to project their feelings and thoughts about the modernist experience. The autobiographical undertones therefore give the modernist novel its strength. Using the New Historicist theoretical approach, this article is predicated on the assumption that the modernist consciousness in Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness and James Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man is enriched by the autobiographical undertones. In other words, the protagonists in both works reflect their authors' life experiences. Conrad and Joyce use their protagonists as mouthpieces to project individual freedom and the bestial part of man. Conrad envisions a life of honesty, sincerity, justice, fidelity and restraint while Joyce proposes justice, truth and individual freedom

KEYWORDS: Fiction, Autobiography, Modernist

INTRODUCTION

The main objective of this paper is to examine Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness and James Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man in order to highlight the significance of autobiography in the enhancement of the modernist consciousness in the early twentieth century novel. The paper therefore seeks to examine the parallels in the biographical and historical representation of Conrad's and Joyce's lives and how the socio-political setup in which they wrote conditioned their creative imagination and influenced their modernist fiction. It equally aims at evaluating the achievement of the authors' use of this technique of parallel narratives to portray the nihilism of the twentieth century.

What seems a more apparent feature of modernist fiction, which has been addressed piece-meal by modernist critics, is the autobiographical element. As a matter of fact, Conrad's and Joyce's protagonists, Marlow and Stephen respectively, are a reflection of these authors because their experiences in many ways echo their real life experiences. The paper therefore demonstrates that Conrad and Joyce share common ideas about the nihilistic behaviour of modern man, due to the experiences they underwent in life.

Conrad and Joyce represent consciousness impacted by the nihilism of the era and craft characters based on personal experiences in the novel. Their novels are therefore autobiographical novels. To be considered an autobiographical

novel by most standards, there must be a protagonist modelled after the author and a central plotline that mirrors events in his or her life. Fiction as defined by the Encyclopaedia Britannica refers to literature created from the imagination, not presented as fact, though it may be based on a true story or situation. The same encyclopaedia defines autobiography as the biography of oneself narrated by oneself. Linda Anderson cites Lejeune's definition of autobiography as "retrospective prose narrative produced by a real person concerning his own existence, focusing on his individual life, in particular on the development of his personality (3). This study considers autobiography as the real life story of Conrad and Joyce which is blended with fiction to express personal conviction and vision within the modernist experience.

In modernist fiction, the novelist depends on his personal feelings and not convention to show the degree to which he is true to himself. To do this the modern novelist includes elements from his or her own personal life and experiences as he projects the inner life. The writer thus becomes the protagonist, unlike in the traditional novel, projecting himself to portray issues he doesn't appreciate in the society. Conrad and Joyce therefore project how their consciousness from childhood was affected as they came to terms with the nihilistic practices of the society. This paper therefore explores the parallels in terms of upbringing, history, character, geographical setup and political nihilism and how these enrich the modernist consciousness of the two authors.

Upbringing

The life and experiences of Conrad and Joyce impinged on their consciousness and subsequently influenced their writing. Biographical details from their lives reveal that both novelists encountered crises in their upbringing and this experience sharpened their creative visions and subsequent inclusion of autobiographical features in their fiction and the radical rejection of traditional values and techniques. Both authors grew up in profoundly Catholic countries (Poland and Ireland). These countries suffered from colonialism. Conrad and Joyce in their later lives rejected Catholicism and both went on self-exile, and both learned French and wrote in English as an acquired language.

Joseph Conrad has been one of the most studied and debated of British novelists. Conrad's ideas are no doubt grounded in his background as the son of a famous Polish patriot. Although he spent only his first sixteen years in Poland, the tragic personal and family circumstances of this period were the most important and tortured of his life, and were to resonate throughout his career as a novelist. This early experience which "informed every aspect of his later years, was the component of his ideas, his attachments, his memories and even his nightmares" (Karl 16).

As far as Conrad's biography is concerned, Ian Watt writes that Conrad was born in 1857 and christened Josef Konrad Nalecz Korzeniowski. Both his mother, Ewa Bobrowska and his father, Apollo Korzeniowski were descended from wealthy Polish families. Josef found himself, from childhood on, a person without a country because in 1772 Poland had been divided up between Russia, Prussia, and Austria, only to be re-divided in 1793 and 1795 (3). Thus, although Conrad was born into the landed gentry of Polish culture, his childhood years were full of uncertainty. His father, who was dedicated to the cause of Polish independence from Russia was arrested and exiled to the village of Vologda, hundreds of miles north of Moscow (Watt 3). Joyce's father, John Joyce also suffered from political persecution as he was committed to the Irish Home rule struggle to free Ireland from British rule and blamed his subsequent loss of job on anti-Parnellite forces. This had a negative effect on his family just as Conrad's father's exile had a fatal effect on his own family. In the poem written to commemorate his son's baptism "To My Son born in the 85th year of Muscovite oppression", Conrad's father, who was an ardent Polish patriot, wrote: "My child, my son- tell yourself that you are without land, without love,

without Fatherland, without humanity- as long as Poland, our Mother, is enslaved” (Karl 22). Joyce’s country, Ireland, was also enslaved by Britain.

Unfortunately, Conrad's mother developed tuberculosis and died in 1865. Joyce’s own mother died on August 13, 1906 at the age of forty- four (Ellmann 136). The seven—year—old Conrad, who witnessed his mother’s decline in health, was absolutely devastated. He also developed health problems, migraines and lung inflammation, which persisted throughout his life. His father too fell into decline, and he died of tuberculosis in 1869. At the age of eleven, Conrad became an orphan. At this age, he was adopted by his mother’s uncle Tadeusz Bobrowski who loved him dearly. His uncle cared well for his orphaned nephew, sending him first to school in Krakow, later to Geneva with a tutor. (Watt 4).

The voyage that seems to have had the greatest impact on Conrad’s life and art was the one he made up the Congo River in a rusty steamboat. It inspired his writing of Heart of Darkness. The trip from Boma to Stanley Falls and back was one of the last Conrad ever made as a sailor. It marked the beginning of a brief but crucial period of his life, a period that came to an end in 1894, the year his beloved uncle, Tadeusz died. For it was then that Conrad decided to devote himself to writing full time. Shortly after that decision, he got married to Jessie George. He died of a heart attack in August 1924 at the age of 67 and was buried at Canterbury (Watt 4). Having begun his forced exile at the age of four and become an orphan at the age of eleven, Conrad seems to have drawn certain conclusions from his childhood experiences: that human institutions were repressive and cruel; that ideals consumed those who lived by them; and that the earth was an empty, orderless void. James Joyce shared Conrad’s view about the repressive and cruel nature of human institutions. These conclusions underpin Conrad’s fiction.

From Conrad's upbringing we can see that the fact that his native country was conquered by imperial powers may account for the reason of his empathy with other subjugated people. In Heart of Darkness Conrad portrays blacks sympathetically and their plight tragically and refers sarcastically to the supposedly noble aims of European colonists thereby demonstrating his scepticism about the moral superiority of white men. Also Conrad had a fascination for voyages and new lands as the narrator Marlow. He himself had visited Africa and seen the stark realities of colonialism and many of his entries in his Congo diary resemble the incidents in Heart of Darkness. Having been born in a deeply Catholic country, it had an influence in his works though he renounced religion in later life. Joyce as well was greatly influenced by the Catholic faith though he renounced it during his university years.

Like Conrad, background information about James Joyce reveals that his real life experiences impacted his novel, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. Richard Ellmann in James Joyce writes that James Augustine Aloysius Joyce was born on 2 February 1882 to John Stanislaus Joyce and Mary Jane Murray in the Dublin suburb of Rathgar. He was the eldest in a family of four boys and six girls. Joseph Conrad on the other hand was an only child. Joyce's father, John Joyce had inherited property in his home town, Cork and was Collector of Rates for Dublin at the time of James’s birth. It was an undemanding, well-paid post, but John Joyce was a reckless spender and a heavy drinker, and he had begun to mortgage his Cork properties as early as 1881. As his family grew in number, so did the mortgages (eleven altogether). In 1892, his post was abolished and he was pensioned off at the age of forty-two. Thereafter, a rapid decline in the family fortunes set in. James had been sent to Clongowes Wood College, a highly thought - of Jesuit school in county Kildare, but was withdrawn in 1891 after three years there. He spent some time at a Christian Brother’s School until Father Conmee, former rector of Clongowes who knew him as a very promising pupil, kindly arranged for him to have a free place at Belvedere

College, the Jesuit School in Dublin. (Ellmann 35)

Joyce will echo this life experience in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* by narrating how Stephen's father (John Joyce) arranges with Father Conmee for his admission into Belvedere College. "One evening his father came home full of news which kept his tongue busy all through dinner...Don't I tell you he's provincial of the order now? I never liked the idea of sending him to the Christian brothers myself" (65–66). Joyce uses the real name of the priest and school in his novel as proof of his strong sensitivity to this kind gesture. At first Joyce worked well at Belvedere: he won exhibitions in annual examinations and was noted for his piety, becoming head of the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary in 1869. However, it appears that in that same year, at the age of fourteen, he met a prostitute one night and had his first sexual experience. Not long afterwards, in a school retreat conducted by Father James A. Cullen at the end of November and at the beginning of December 1896, Joyce was deeply stirred by guilt feelings, went to confession and for some months tried seriously to live a life of piety (*A Portrait of the Artist* 48–49). But his faith then began to disintegrate. He rejected the suggestion to become a priest and became more careless in his studies.

Joyce went to University College, Dublin, just like his protagonist Stephen, in 1898, where he studied English, French and Italian, and took his B.A Degree in 1902. Throughout his Belvedere and his university days the home situation was deteriorating. John Joyce was drinking and boasting the family into poverty. He moved the family from house to house to escape the landlords, having sometimes burnt the house banisters for firewood. He was cruel to his wife and once when drunk tried to strangle her (Ellmann 136). The family succumbed to the hopeless and alcohol-soaked poverty that Joyce would depict so movingly in *Ulysses*. He wrote movingly about the family's collapse in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, where the children discuss an impending eviction in funny language: "Because-boro theboro landboro lordboro willboro putboro usboro outboro." (149)

Before Joyce left the University, he had already written several essays - one of them on Ibsen - and he had formulated a core of his own theory of art, a theory similar to Stephen's in Chapter Five. At the age of twenty, Joyce did what Stephen Dedalus is about to do at the novel's end and turned away from his family, his country and his church. He ran off to the continent. In 1903, he returned to Ireland to visit his dying mother, but soon after her death in 1903 he was again bound for Europe. In Trieste, Joyce wrote incessantly and eked out a living teaching English. He put together *Dubliners*, a group of stories based on brief experiences he called "epiphanies" (Ellmann 83). He continued work on a novel he had started in Ireland.

From the accounts given about the upbringing of Conrad and Joyce, it is clear that their novels are influenced by the traumatic experiences they had from childhood within their family and society. By the age of eleven Conrad had lost both parents and was without a country because Poland had been partitioned. With this experience he was thus sensitive to the plight of Africans when he visited the Congo in 1890 and projected it in *Heart of Darkness*. Commenting on this Frederick Karl in *Joseph Conrad: The Three Lives* writes that the dying Africans, given a different time and place, were not unlike the Polish exiles he had experienced in his childhood, dying physically or spiritually under the Russian (288). Similarly, the abject poverty resulting from his father's financial irresponsibility and drunkenness, the injustice he suffered from schoolmates and priest and the fall of Parnell impinged on Joyce's growing consciousness and are echoed in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.

Conrad and Joyce therefore both experienced trauma in their families- Conrad faced forced exile at the age of four

because of his father's political activities and became an orphan because of the harsh conditions in exile that killed both parents (they both died of tuberculosis) while Joyce had to move house frequently because of poverty occasioned by the father's reckless spending. His father blamed the loss of his job on his political support of Charles Stewart Parnell. The two writers equally suffered from the devastating effects of colonialism at an early age and though they renounced the Catholic faith because they claimed it was repressive, it had a strong influence on them and their writings. These sharpened their modernist consciousness as they glaringly explore the themes of hypocrisy, betrayal, cruelty, injustice and irresponsibility among others in their works.

History Conrad's Belgian- Congo Experience and Joyce's Irish Experience

The historical consideration helps us to understand the nature and originality of Conrad's and Joyce's narrative methods more clearly; and these methods are directly related to the authors' sensitivity to the fundamental social and intellectual conflicts of their period. From Conrad's and Joyce's upbringing and the painful experiences they suffered from, we now move into the historical background to examine how it equally affected them and thus influenced their works. What stands out with Conrad is the period which marked the scramble for Africa and his traumatic visit to the Belgian Congo and with Joyce, it is the Irish question. As far as Conrad's historical context is concerned, the present-day Democratic Republic of Congo was known as the Belgian Congo from 1908 until 1960, when it gained its independence. It was officially called "L'État Independent du Congo" (The Congo Free State). But the Congo became Belgian from 1885 thanks to a conference called in Berlin in 1884 by Otto Von Bismarck, first Chancellor of the newly-formed German Empire. The Congo was declared the personal property of Leopold II who controlled it until his death in 1908 (Watt 5).

Thus the Congo was ruled by a tyrant whose promise to bring civilization to Africa turned out to be a joke. Leopold had divided the country into sixteen districts, each governed by a commissioner who rendered the local chiefs impotent. Some of these officials went to build personal fortunes by collecting taxes from the natives, and since few of the natives had anything to give but their labour; the commissioners were, in effect, shareholders and the Congolese were slaves in all but name. Leopold in turn received a portion of all profits made by his administrators, so it was in his interest to make sure that when Africans rebelled against the sentries who guarded them while they worked out the taxes, they be taught a swift and brutal lesson (Watt 5).

Reports of atrocities drifted back to Europe within a few years after Leopold had been granted proprietorship. Baptist missionaries duped by the King's stated goal of Christianising the Congo were among the first to cry foul. But the Congo was far from Europe and the damning reports from scattered missionaries were relatively few and far between. Many of the station managers and traders were drawn from the ranks of the Belgian army, and by 1890, they had, with Leopold's blessing given the ire to their king's promise that the Congo would be a free-trade territory. Ivory, the most valuable commodity had become a Belgian monopoly; non-Belgian traders caught carrying it could be summarily shot, either by Leopold's army-trained representatives or by their sentries. Among these sentries were natives freed from their black slave-owners and offered protection by the White invaders.

Conrad was to learn about his own nature and human nature in general by travelling to Africa (Murfin 8). The Congo was supposed to be a relatively free peaceable state, open to all traders and therefore free not only of murderous violence but also of slavery found in so many areas of the world. In seeing how easily Europeans who set forth in ships to

enlighten and civilise can corrupt and destroy, Conrad came to a profound realisation about human nature: whiteness and light may turn out to be blackness and darkness, and blackness and darkness may be relatively pure. In learning that hard lesson, Conrad also discovered something profound about himself: that it was as a writer, not as a merchant sailor, that he wanted to explore the world –especially the inner world of civilised humanity. (Murfin 9).

Conrad returned to Brussels on April 26, 1890. There he learned that a steamer captain named Freiesleben had died in the Congo and that a command was available. Aunt Marguerite proved very helpful in helping Conrad fulfill his childhood dream. She used her influence on several important men involved in colonization including Albert Thys. After signing with Thys, Conrad headed for a French port, from which he shipped to Boma, the main port of entry to the Congo (Murfin 10). Conrad wrote letters back to Marguerite Poradowska, so we have an idea of how his journey to the heart of the “Haut-Congo” was like. Conrad arrived at his destination on June 12, after an interminable-seeming sea voyage down the African coast. The trip from Bordeaux to Boma on the *Ville de Maceio*, took more than a month. Forty miles from Boma, in Matadi, Conrad met Roger Casement, who had come to the Congo Free State thinking that he would abolish the slave trade carried on by Arabs in the area and establish a railway that would link the coastal region with Stanley Pool, where the Congo River becomes navigable and stays navigable all the way inland to Stanley Falls.

When he met Conrad in the Spring of 1890, Casement was beginning the railway project, as yet unaware that many of King Leopold’s men were using the natives as slave labour. Conrad shared a room with Casement for almost a month and then continued on his journey (Murfin 10). Frederick Karl in *Joseph Conrad: The Three Lives* explains that the trip to Stanley Pool had to be made on foot. On the way, he saw evidence that men and women were being treated worse than animals. Conrad recorded these scenes in the diary he kept: “saw at a camp place the dead body of a Backings. Shot? Horrid smell”] “saw another dead body lying by the path in an attitude of meditative repose... At night when the moon rose heard shouts and drumming in distant villages. Passed a bad night” (290–291).

The loss of a command was a serious blow to Conrad and may have made him prefer the slow progress of writing (*Almayer’s Folly*). The period starting just before Conrad’s arrival at Kinshasa marked the beginning of a period of disillusionment-with Africa, with life on deck, with colonial trade and with white European agents running trading stations throughout the Congo. Conrad particularly disliked Camille Delcommune, the manager of the station at Kinshasa, whom he later called “a common ivory dealer with base instincts”. To Conrad’s dismay, Delcommune decided to make the trip on the *Rios des Belges* all the way to the Inner Station at Stanley Falls, where an agent named Klein lay desperately ill. That four-week trip and the return downriver to Kinshasa with the corpse of Klein robbed Conrad of all taste for life in general (Karl 294). Conrad who wished to leave Africa as quickly as possible, got out of his contact with the *Société Anonyme Bilge pour le Commerce du Haut-Congo*. A terrible case of dysentery that he had picked up on his journey turned out to be an adequate excuse.

In *Heart of Darkness* Conrad presents Delcommune as the manager. He is directly or indirectly to blame for all the disorder, waste, cruelty, and neglect in all the three stations. The Inner station was quite well organized and its chief threat came not from Georges Antoine Klein and his methods but from conflicts between Belgian Arabs in the collection of Ivory (Karl 297). Apparently the Belgians found the Arab method of raiding settlements and the gaining of slaves, later to be sold for ivory, too crude and as a consequence, had to use military force as a form of discouragement. For the novel, Conrad needed to intensify Kurtz’s role in order to strengthen his view of the agent as

a new type of European demigod, who when unsupported by his own civilization descends into the unspeakable.

At Bema, Conrad caught a ship back to England. The intended of Kurtz's whom Marlow visited was probably based on Marguerite, although Conrad certainly did not pass on "The horror, the horror!" which he had himself experienced. For that kind of experience, there were no simple words; he would have to "make you see" (300). The Congo experience supported other experiences which Conrad has had as a boy in Poland, as a child in his parents' exile. These created what Conrad knew about human depravity, baseness, degradation and cruelty, as well as the individual's ability to survive such knowledge (301).

Having discussed the historical circumstance of Conrad, it is appropriate to consider that of Joyce. Joyce like Conrad was greatly influenced by the historical and cultural background against which he wrote. The Act of Union which made Ireland part of the United Kingdom and abolished the separate Irish Parliament was abolished in 1800. Throughout the nineteenth century various movements developed which gave expression to the demands of the Irish for greater control of their own affairs at home. British rule had given to Ireland not only an Anglo-Irish aristocracy of landowners but also a Protestant Church of Ireland of which the ruling minority tended to be members. Thus, the Roman Catholic Church was largely the church of the peasantry and the majority of the Irish population. In the last decades of the nineteenth century there was a very complex relationship between the numerous movements in which the desire for a distinctive Irish identity expressed itself (Blamires 7).

There were movements for land reform which were designed to improve the lot of the Irish peasantry, movements for Home Rule in an Irish parliament, movements for total independence from Great Britain and the setting up of a republic, movements to revive Gaelic as the national language, and movements to revitalise Irish literature in English from historic and legendary Irish sources. An Irishman might be a keen advocate of one or more of these causes and yet be at loggerheads with a fellow-Irishman who supported another of these causes. The possibilities for argument and strife among the Irish themselves were vast. Charles Stewart Parnell (1846-91) was the great advocate for parliamentary Home Rule for Ireland. Michael Davitt (1846-1906) was an advocate for land reform. The attempts of the British Prime Minister, W. E. Gladstone (1809-98), to establish Home Rule in Ireland were defeated at Westminster in 1886 and 1892 during Joyce's childhood and youth (Blamires 7).

Joyce's education was well looked after by the Jesuits and it was logical that he should go to the University College which was founded in 1852. It was a Catholic University. In spite of this, leaving Ireland seemed essential to a young man who wished to dedicate himself to writing and whose family situation was such that not even the most strenuous labour nor endurance and sympathy, could rescue the home from squalor and disorder. John Joyce had once screamed drunkenly at his dying wife, "Die and be damned to you". The great irony of Joyce's literary achievements is that the man who left Ireland with the conscious determination to work in exile never wrote anything that did not focus lovingly as well as critically on Dublin and its inhabitants (9).

Joyce's rejection of his family, religion and nation is a consequence of his dissatisfaction with these "nets" and he glaringly mirrors this in his novel just as Conrad who criticises the cruelty of the European colonialist as a result of his traumatic Congo experience. Thus the experiences of the Irish question and the scramble for Africa were traumatic to Joyce and Conrad respectively and gave birth to *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Heart of Darkness*. As one expects

from modernist works, these novels offer a thorough critique of the key institutions that seek to shape the lives of their central characters who are the mouthpieces of Conrad and Joyce. Both writers present an account of their sense of the inadequacy of the institutions in their society.

CHARACTER AND GEOGRAPHICAL SETUP

The characters and geographical setup in the works of Conrad and Joyce have some autobiographical parallels which enrich their fiction making it closer to life. This is contrary to the traditional novel where emphasis is on events, social convention and ethics. There is a parallel between Conrad's Congo experience and Marlow's just as there is a parallel between James Joyce and Stephen Dedalus' in his development as a potential artist in Dublin. There are equally some prominent characters who influenced the vision of Conrad and Joyce who are portrayed in their works under fictional names or even real names as in Joyce's work. In Joyce's novel, most of the geographical setting or place names are exactly the same as in real life while in Conrad's they are implicit or symbolic. For example, the sepulchral city refers to Brussels in *Heart of Darkness* while Clongowes Wood College, Belvedere College and the University of Dublin that Stephen attends in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* are the same institutions attended by Joyce in real life.

Conrad rebelled against his society's nihilistic practices. He is most representative of his time because he stands in sharpest opposition to it. He reminds us that the great modernist writer is a rebel. Commenting about the modernist writer's rejection of traditional values, Jonah Raskin in "The Mythology of Imperialism" writes that

A new universe of fiction was set down in their place. A revolution in the novel was effected. It was Joseph Conrad—the Pole, the outsider—who battered down the old walls. He set the clock on the time bomb of the twentieth-century revolution in the novel. His first blast leveled the old house of nineteenth-century fiction. His second ripped asunder the imperial house of modern fiction: Rudyard Kipling's monument to the empire. Kipling's walls hide the truth of imperialism. Conrad broke them down. He dragged the colonial world onto stage center of English fiction (23).

As stated in the quotation, Conrad was revolutionary in his time by presenting the naked truth about colonization in his fiction while on the other hand Rudyard Kipling celebrated colonialism by hiding the truth behind it.

As concerns the autobiographical relationship between Conrad and Marlow, Ross Murfin in *Joseph Conrad* outlines the parallel between the novelist and his main character. Marlow, the protagonist in *Heart of Darkness*, tells his listeners about his childhood passion for maps and about his declared intention to, someday, go to the blank heart of Africa. He describes how he signed up for a Congo command after receiving help from an aunt. Whereas Conrad got his command due to the death of a captain named Freiesleben, Marlow got his after the death of captain Fresleven (13). Marlow's description of his sea voyage down the African coast reads like Conrad's diary, and his description of an overland journey from the company station not far from the African Coast to the Central Station repeats many of Conrad's experiences in travelling from Matadi to Kinshasa. Heat and mosquitoes and the lack of water are mentioned, as is a white companion who becomes so sick with fever that he has to be carried in a hammock. A corpse like the one Conrad was shocked to see while on his overland trek turns up in *Heart of Darkness*: "can't say I saw any road or any upkeep, unless the body of a middle-aged negro, with a bullet hole on the forehead, upon which I absolutely stumbled..." (Murfin 14).

Marlow, like Conrad, learns that an accident has befallen the steamer that he had to command; like Conrad, he journeys upriver to retrieve a sick agent who dies on board shortly after being rescued. And Marlow is accompanied on his

travels by a man who must have been modelled on Camille Delcommune, the Station manager at Kinshasa whom Conrad referred to as “a very common ivory dealer with base instincts”, Marlow calls the manager of the Central Station, who accompanies him upriver to the Inner Station, “a common trader” with “no learning and no intelligence”.

Conrad spent some six months in the Congo altogether, carrying with him (like Marlow) the partly written manuscript of his first novel, *Almayer's Folly*. And in *Heart of Darkness* we read “The MS. of *Almayer's Folly*, carried about me as if it were a talisman or a treasure, went there too.” On 10 May 1890, Conrad left Bordeaux in the *Ville de Maceio* for the Congo. On 12 June 1890 he disembarked at Boma, the seat of government for the Congo. Marlow also disembarks at the seat of government. He had to trek long distances. As Norman Sherry says, “For Conrad it must have been the most gruelling part of his Congo journey, lasting as it did from 28 June to 2 August 1890” (37), but he has crammed into one paragraph of *Heart of Darkness* all the unpleasant and macabre aspects of his own journey.

In the Congo Diary, Conrad records “At night when the moon rose heard shouts and drumming in distant villages. Passed a bad night” (153). In *Heart of Darkness* we read: ‘Perhaps on some quiet night the tremor of far-off drums, sinking, swelling, a tremor vast, faint; a sound weird, appealing, suggestive, and wild.’ We might also compare it with Bentley's account of his first journey to Kinshasa in 1881: “We had heard drums before, but until now had not thought much of them. From this time, they became an intolerable nuisance” (136). The diary entry of Conrad for 29 July, concerns bad news from up the river ‘All the steamers disabled. One wrecked.’ In fact, before Conrad reached Kinshasa, he heard that the *Florida*, which he had expected to command, was wrecked. We might compare it with *Heart of Darkness*: “one of them [...] informed me with great volubility and many digressions [...] that my steamer was at the bottom of the river”.

However, as Norman Sherry points out, “The *Florida* was wrecked on 18 July, but was refloated and brought back to Kinshasa in five days” (Kimbrough 107). Conrad was not, like Marlow, delayed there for three months and involved in the salvage work. Conrad not only understood that the true nature of Western society at that time was revealed in the colonies, but from his Congo experience came to believe that it was his duty as novelist to unmask that truth. This is confirmed in “Joseph Conrad and British Critics of Colonialism” where H.S. Zins comments about Conrad's shared notion with Karl Marx and Jean Paul Sartre that in the colonies one could see the truth about Western society stripped bare (65).

Since *Heart of Darkness* is an autobiographical novel, it is necessary to highlight the fictional elements as well. The differences between Conrad's experiences and those of Charlie Marlow are striking. The man who hires Marlow is not named Thys—in fact no names are given for Marlow's aunt, the station manager modelled on Delcommune, or the white companion who becomes sick and has to be carried much as Prosper Harou became lame and unable to walk. The ship Marlow travels upriver on is left similarly unnamed, as is the “Company” that Conrad knew as the *Société Anonyme Belge pour le Commerce du Haut-Congo*. No character in the novel bears more than a passing resemblance to Roger Casement, whom Conrad stayed with in Matadi. Whereas Conrad didn't get to captain a ship, thanks to the damage done to his intended vessel, Marlow waits long for rivets and repairs that eventually allow him to command his steam boat. Marlow retrieves Kurtz, only to have him die on his ship; Anton Klein was the name of the agent who died on Conrad's ship. But whereas all we knew about Klein is that he had fallen ill near Stanley Falls, Kurtz is a mysterious imaginative creation, a kind of Everyman, like Marlow, but a mythological demon figure as well. Kurtz is someone who exceeds the dimensions of anyone Conrad met in the Congo, just as the Africa in *Heart of Darkness* is far more than a continent—it has universal dimensions (Murfin 14).

Just as there is a parallel between Conrad and his protagonist Marlow in terms of character as well as the real geographical setting and the implied setting in *Heart of Darkness*, there is also a parallel between Joyce and Stephen Dedalus, his protagonist, in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and most of the setting. The schools and other institutions which Joyce attended or visited in real life are the same Stephen attends in the novel. Joyce and Stephen have much in common. Both were marked by their upbringing in Catholic Dublin, a city that harboured the dreams of being the capital of an independent nation which in reality was ruled by England. Like Stephen, Joyce was the eldest son of a family of ten children that slid rapidly down the social and economic ladder.

When Joyce was born in 1882, the family was still comfortably off. But its income dwindled fast after Joyce's sociable, witty, hard-drinking father, John Stanislaus, lost his political job as Stephen's father, Simon, loses his - after the fall of the Irish leader and promoter of independence, Charles Stewart Parnell. Although the loss of the post was not directly related to Parnell's fall, Joyce's father worshipped "the uncrowned king of Ireland" and blamed his loss on anti-Parnell forces like the Roman Catholic Church. Joyce portrays the kind of strong emotions Parnell stirred up in the Christmas dinner scene in Chapter One of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Like Simon Dedalus, the jobless John Stanislaus Joyce was forced to move his family frequently, often leaving rent bills unpaid. Richard Ellmann comments about Joyce's father's defects and merits and how he is represented in the novel by writing in James Joyce that:

Joyce, though, seems to have taken a more cheerful view of his family problems, and to have shown more patience with his irresponsible father, than did his fictional hero. He seems to have inherited some of his father's temperament; he could clown at times, and he laughed so readily that he was called "Sunny Jim" (Blamires 10). He received a rigorous Jesuit education just like his protagonist. In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Joyce relives through Stephen the intellectual and emotional struggles that came with his schooling. Joyce's classmates admired the rebellious brilliance that questioned authority, but he remained an outsider, socially and intellectually.

Other characters who influenced Joyce's life and consequently his writings are John Kelly, who appears in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* under the name of John Casey and Dante Riordan. According to Richard Ellmann in *James Joyce*, Kelly was in prison several times for Land League agitation, and John Joyce regularly invited him to recuperate from imprisonment, at that time very rigorous, at the house in Bray (24). Kelly was frequently in danger of being rearrested. Once a constable named Joyce, who was friendly with John Joyce because of their name, came to the house late in the evening to warn them that he would have to serve a warrant on Kelly in the morning. Kelly escaped by car that night. Consorting with an enemy of the crown was probably risky enough for an officeholder, but John Joyce never equivocated about his nationalism, and his growing and outspoken devotion to Parnell, which Kelly fully shared, was already forming the mind of his watchful son James Joyce who portrays this in the quarrel at the Christmas party (Ellmann 24). Writing about Dante, Ellmann states that Soon after the Joyces moved to Bray they were joined by "Mrs. 'Dante' Hearn Conway from Cork, who was to act as governess to the children: A fat, clever woman, she was too embittered by a disastrous marriage to fit easily into the tolerant, high-spirited household" (24).

Another influential, though a minor character, is Eileen Vance. By age and temperament Joyce became the ringleader in the children's games. Along the street, at 4 Martello Terrace (not 7, as *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* says), lived a chemist named James Vance with his family, and although the Vances were Protestant, the families were quickly drawn together. Vance's bass voice boomed against John Joyce's light tenor in 'Come-all-ye's.' The Vances' eldest

child, four months younger than James, was a pretty girl named Eileen, and the two fathers often spoke half-seriously of uniting their first-born. Dante Conway warned James that if he played with Eileen he would certainly go to hell, and he duly informed Eileen of his destination but did not cease to merit it. Hell and its superintendent had already become useful histrionic counters for him (Ellmann 26). This shows how fanatical Dante was in terms of religious beliefs. This incident contributed, in later life, to Joyce's rejection of religion.

Father James Daly is another real life character, whose behaviour affected Joyce negatively and subsequently influenced his dislike of the Catholic faith. He is involved in an event which is described in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and confirmed by Joyce to Herbert Gorman; when another boy broke Stephen's glasses and Father Dolan paddled the victim on the mistaken premise that he had broken the glasses himself to avoid study. Father Dolan was in real life Father James Daly, the efficient prefect of studies at Clongowes for thirty years, and a martinet. Joyce was to speak of him later to Gorman as 'low-bred.' He was not then the white-haired old man described in the novel, but a dark-haired person of about forty. On this occasion Joyce bravely protested to the rector, Father Conmee, and was sustained by him. Probably at this time the other boys began to respect him; such a development is suggested, a little obscurely, in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, and is borne out by accounts of Joyce's life at the school by contemporaries (Ellmann 27).

The religious training he received in the Jesuit schools also shaped Joyce, giving him first a faith to believe in and then a weight to rebel against. Like Stephen, he was the son of a religious mother and was for a time devoutly religious, and then found that other attractions prevailed. Like Stephen, Joyce had early experiences with prostitutes during his teenage years. By the age of fourteen he had begun his sexual life in Dublin brothels, and though he was temporarily overwhelmed with remorse after a religious retreat held at his Catholic school (just like Stephen), he soon saw that he could not lead the life of virtuous obedience demanded of a priest. Instead, he exchanged religious devotion for devotion to writing. Joyce, like Stephen, left Ireland to pursue the life of a poet and writer. Considering these similarities in both Stephen's and Joyce's careers, one could agree with Margaret Norris' assertion in *Joyce's Web: The Social Unraveling of Modernism* that "A Portrait is both the author's autobiographical fiction and the autobiography of the fictional character. It provides the portrait of both artists" (51).

Since the novel is not pure autobiography, there are obvious differences between Joyce and his mouthpiece Stephen. Nicoletta Stanca writes in "From Baby Tuckoo to Sunny Jim" that in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Stephen cannot be identified with Joyce in every respect, "though there are many characters patterned on real people in Joyce's life, many streets and place names preserved as such and many events based on Joyce's real life experiences. In other words, Stephen is not a direct self-portrait" (38). Joyce's typical method was to take one aspect of the character and exaggerate it in picturing his alter ego. For instance, Joyce's dislike of violence is turned into young Stephen's smallness and weakness in *A Portrait*. The boy seemed to have felt good at Clongowes, yet, the picture in the novel is different and his loneliness and homesickness are exaggerated (38). Moreover, Joyce was a good athlete but his dislike of brutal sports is turned into frailty and clumsiness in *A Portrait*. Another reason why the novel should not be taken as pure autobiography is Joyce's intention of universalizing his protagonist's experiences. Stanca continues

Thus, we may explain the use of the indefinite article for the noun "portrait" and not for the noun "artist" in the title of the novel. Studying the growth and development of Stephen Dedalus he was not exclusively concerned with getting to the heart of the young James Joyce or an imaginary equivalent, but in getting to the heart of the young artist as such.

Though Joyce warned people not to take Stephen for himself, he signed the first version of *A Portrait* with the pseudonym Stephen Dedalus (39).

If there were no differences between the projection of Stephen's experiences and those of James Joyce, we would not talk of autobiographical fiction; it would be pure autobiography. Thus Joyce projects some of his experiences through Stephen his mouthpiece to project his feelings and impressions about the values of his society.

From the biographical and historical background information on Conrad and Joyce and their works, it is evident that the two novelists' experiences affected their consciousness and influenced their blend of fiction with personal life experiences to project their genuine thoughts and feelings. In *Heart of Darkness* Conrad exposes the truth he discovers in the colonial experience in Africa – every human being including the European has the potential for evil manifested through greed, hypocrisy, cruelty and backbiting of the European colonisers. In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* Joyce exposes the hypocrisy and repressive tendency in religion and politics as well as the irresponsibility of his father. Both *Heart of Darkness* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* serve as outlets for the frustrating experiences of the two authors.

Heart of Darkness seems, prophetically, to sum up areas of experience that gained new prominence in the light of historical events in the twentieth century. The First World War showed how men could be engulfed, diminished, and destroyed by man-made organisations and technology. Conrad seemed to have anticipated this in his depiction of the ways in which men in Africa served, and died for, a remorseless organisation. He portrays men dwarfed by the system that dominates them and by an alien environment. Hitlerism and Holocaust as Cedric Watts in '*Heart of Darkness*' points out, seemed to have been anticipated in the depiction of Kurtz's depravity (50). Kurtz is the persuasive genius whose grandiose ambitions are reduced to the exclamation "Exterminate all the brutes" (1796).

In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* Joyce like Conrad projects the unreliability of societal values. We find Stephen, a sensitive youth, shaped by his surroundings, feeling their pressure and rebelling against them to become himself. William York Tindall in *A Reader's Guide to Joyce* comments, "No father, actual, ecclesiastical or even divine, seems fatherly or reliable" (57). Stephen wants to escape from the nets of his family and society that entrap him.

Political Nihilism

As earlier mentioned, Conrad and Joyce both write within a particular historical and political context. Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* reflects his traumatic experiences in the Belgian Congo in 1890 while Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* reflects his experiences of the Irish question in the late nineteenth century. The theme of imperialism is projected in their works. There is similarity in the experiences of the protagonists within the political milieu and their authors.

The event which required Conrad's immediate presence in the Congo where he witnessed firsthand the barbarism of his fellow whites was that the Danish captain of the *Otago* had been murdered by Africans during a trivial quarrel. In the *Heart of the Darkness*, Marlow says the quarrel was due to a "misunderstanding about some hens" (1764). The colour of these hens is black and symbolizes the wickedness of the European heart which is out to exploit and oppress the Africans. Conrad was offered to replace the dead master of the *Otago*. One important point to note here is that Conrad at first believed the high-minded propaganda about bringing the benevolent light of civilization to the dark continent and that only after he had reached the Congo and seen the brutal exploitation of the resources and the people did he discover the

disappointing reality. Conrad wrote in his *Heart of Darkness* about the disparity between his idealized expectations and the disappointing reality of his first trip to Africa:

A great melancholy descended on me. Yes, this was the very spot. But there was no shadowy friend to stand by my side in the night of the enormous wilderness, no great haunting memory, but only the unholy recollection of a prosaic newspaper "stunt" and the distasteful knowledge of the vilest scramble for loot that ever disfigured the history of human conscience and geographical exploration. What an end to the idealized realities of a boy's daydreams! (1782).

Heart of Darkness, in most respects, appears to be a remarkably faithful transcription of the historical situation. Marlow observes several dead porters along the trail and say of the region, "The population had cleared out a long time ago" (1764). Conrad himself went on several of the expeditions as he recorded in his diary and saw three African corpses, including "a skeleton tied up to a post, and a youth with a gunshot wound in the head". Marlow remarks that he saw the body of a middle-aged Negro, with a bullet-hole in the forehead. The company created by a Belgian financier Albert Thys, the *Compagnie du Chemin de Fer du Congo*, was obliged to send recruiting expeditions farther and farther afield to find carriers. Finally, in order to cope with the shortage of labour needed for the railway, which was essential to King Leopold's planned economic exploitation of the country, Leopold's officials resorted to three solutions: "importing workers from other African colonies, putting the Congolese 'criminals' on chain-gangs, and at last using forced or slave labour" (Hawkins 98).

Conrad probably saw or heard about these colonial affairs and had Marlow say, just before he steps into the "grove of death", "they were called criminals, and the outraged law ... had come to them, an insoluble mystery from the sea" (1770). Jeffrey Meyers in *Joseph Conrad: A Biography* writes that apart from his own experiences in the Congo, a British explorer called Casement whom "Conrad met on the Lower Congo had a profound impact on Conrad's attitude towards the Congo and on his fictional portrayal of his grim experience in Africa" (99). Conrad shared a room with Casement for two weeks and soon became very friendly with him. Casement reported in his *Congo Diary*, a long factual document, the atrocities committed upon what Casement himself called "the poor, the naked, the fugitive, the hunted, the tortured, the dying men and women of the Congo" (Casement in Singleton-Gates and Girodias 96). The facts written in Casement's diary include such deeds of the white man as that Africans, bound with thongs that contracted in the rain and cut to the bone, had their swollen hands beaten with rifle butts until they fell off and that chained slaves were forced to drink the white man's defecations and that, hands and feet were chopped off for their rings, were lined up behind each other and shot with one cartridge and that wounded prisoners were eaten by maggots till they died and were then thrown to starving pyre-dogs or devoured by cannibal tribes. Casement also gives an anecdote, in the diary, about a boy who described to him how he was wounded during a raid on his village:

He fell down, presumably insensible, but came to his senses while his hand was being hacked off at the wrist. I asked him how it was he could possibly lie silent and give no sign. He answered that he felt the cutting, but was afraid to move, knowing that he would be killed, if he showed any sign of life (Casement in Singleton-Gates and Girodias 164).

Casement's *Congo Diary* substantiates the accuracy of the conditions described in *Heart of Darkness*. Conrad, like Casement, was one of the first men to question the Western notion of progress, to attack the hypocritical justification of colonialism and to reveal in documentary form the savage degradation of the white man in Africa. The conditions

described in Conrad's text such as the chained gangs, the grove of death, the payment in brass rods, the cannibalism and the human skulls on the fence posts are similar to the conditions described by Casement in his Congo Diary.

Conrad questions the value of European civilization in his text as Casement did in his diary. During his Congo experience, Conrad had an encounter with a man Camille Delcommune in Kinshasa. Delcommune was the Société Belge's manager. Marlow's encounter with the manager in *Heart of Darkness* parallels Conrad's encounter with Delcommune. Marlow recounts in *Heart of Darkness*:

My first interview with the manager was curious. He did not ask me to sit down after my twenty-mile walk that morning. He was commonplace in complexion, in feature, in manners, and in voice. He was of middle size and of ordinary build. His eyes, of the usual blue, were perhaps remarkably cold, and he certainly could make his glance fall on one as trenchant and heavy as an axe (1774).

During his very first encounter, Conrad was criticised by the impatient and irritated Delcommune for taking so long on his journey from Matadi and was informed that the *Florida*, which Conrad was supposed to command, had been damaged on the river and needed extensive repairs in Kinshasa. And then Delcommune, thinking that Conrad had to learn to navigate the swift and ever-changing river, assigned him to the *Roi des Belges*, whose young Danish captain Ludwig Koch had been ill. During the voyage to Stanley Falls, in the ship there was a Belgian mechanic, the ailing Koch and four passengers including Delcommune. The crew of thirty Africans included a number of cannibals (Meyers 104).

The purpose of the voyage of the *Roi des Belges* from Kinshasa to Stanley Falls was to relieve one of the company's agents at the Falls. Gerard Jean- Aubry in Joseph Conrad in the Congo writes that "The commercial agent's health caused a great anxiety. He died due to his illness and was buried at Bolobo by the ship's company." (169—170) His name was Georges-Antoine Klein. Jean-Aubry argues that this dying agent was turned into the abominable hero of *Heart of Darkness*, Kurtz, who actually had a similar name (170). Conrad's attitude toward the colonial enterprise and the impressions of his bad experiences on him can be seen in one of his letters to Mme. Poradowska written two days after he came back from Stanley Falls. Conrad says in his letter dated September 26, 1890:

My days here are dreary. There is no doubt about it. I decidedly regret having come here: indeed, I regret it bitterly. Everything here repels me. Men and things, but especially the men. And I repel them, too. From the manager in Africa—who has taken the trouble of telling a lot of people that he can't stand me, down to the lowest mechanic—they all have the gift of getting on my nerves ... The manager is a common ivory-dealer with sordid instincts who considers himself a trader when he is nothing but a kind of African shopkeeper. His name is Delcommune. He hates the English, and of course I am regarded here as an Englishman (Karl and Laurence 62-63).

The political domination of the Africans was nihilistic as the people were treated with deceit, fraud, robbery, arson, murder, slave- raiding and utmost cruelty. This affected Marlow's consciousness negatively. Conrad chose the values of efficiency and "the idea" which were widely held in England at the time, to condemn the type of imperialism practised in the Congo. Hunt Hawkins in "Conrad's Critique of Imperialism in *Heart of Darkness*," writes that the causes of imperialism were either politically or economically motivated depending on the circumstance (290).

However, Conrad saw his Congo experience as the turning point of his intellectual development. In a letter to Edward Garnett as reported by Norman Sherry in Conrad's *Western World*, he wrote "before the Congo, I was a perfect

animal. I see everything with such despondency –all in black” (63). After the Congo experience, Conrad’s new insights into the nature of evil turned his innate pessimism into a tragic vision. It is therefore evident that the essence of the tragic vision in *Heart of Darkness* is Conrad’s own experiences in the Congo, which enabled Conrad to transform a tragic vision into literature.

Joyce, like Conrad, glaringly criticises British oppression and suppression of Ireland and the Irish poor treatment of their politicians projects his genuine feelings and the nihilistic circumstances of what came to be known as the Irish question. Richard Ellmann’s biography, *James Joyce*, is informative of this factual aspect. Using Stephen as his mouthpiece or autobiographical hero, Joyce in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* tells the story of Stephen's emergence into consciousness as an entrance into Irish history. Political events that play a crucial role in Stephen's conception of his place in history, such as the fall of Parnell, precede Stephen's conscious understanding of Irish politics, and Stephen's attempts to understand such events as part of the novel's drama. From the first page of the novel, references to the Irish historical and political situation fill Stephen's growing mind. Dante's two brushes—a maroon one for the radical Michael Davitt and a green one for the moderate Parnell—colour his childhood perceptions before he even knows what the colours may signify. These two brushes are factual as mentioned by Ellmann in the biography: “...and she had, as James Joyce wrote, two brushes, one backed in maroon for Davitt and his Land League, the other in green for Parnell. Her loyalties clashed bitterly when Parnell was found to have been an adulterer” (25)

Both politically and economically, Ireland had long been ruled by Britain. A steady rising Irish nationalism protested with increasing violence against the political subordination of Ireland to the British Crown and government. In World War I some Irish nationalists sought German help in rebelling against Britain, and this exacerbated feelings on both sides. (Abrams, *The Norton Anthology* 1684) In the last decades of the nineteenth century there was a very complex relationship between the numerous movements in which the desire for a distinctive Irish identity expressed itself. There were movements for land reform which were designed to improve the lot of the Irish peasantry, movements for Home Rule in an Irish Parliament, movements for total independence from Great Britain and the setting up of a republic, movements to revive Gaelic as the national language, and movements to revitalize Irish literature in English from historic and legendary Irish sources. The possibilities for argument and strife among the Irish themselves were vast. Charles Stewart Parnell (1846-91) was the great advocate of parliamentary Home Rule for Ireland. Michael Davitt (1846 – 1906) was an advocate of land reform.

Both Parnell and Davitt are mentioned in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. The political pressures occasioned by British subordination of Ireland impinged on the family. Joyce’s father worshipped Parnell and blamed his loss on anti-Parnell forces like the Roman Catholic Church. Joyce portrays the kind of strong emotions Parnell stirred up in the Christmas dinner scene in chapter one of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. The argument between Dante Riordan and John Casey and Simon Dedalus centers on the church’s treatment of the Irish nationalist politician Charles Stuart Parnell. Parnell led the fight for Home Rule, a form of limited independence for Ireland. However, just as he seemed on the verge of success, he had been named in a divorce case because he had been having an affair with a married woman, Kitty O’Shea. Because of this, the Catholic Church in Ireland denounced Parnell, who was disgraced and who died shortly thereafter.

Dante argues that it was right for the Church to denounce the sinful Parnell, saying that the Irish people should

submit to the authority of the bishops and priests even if this means losing a chance for independence. Mr. Casey, who is also a Catholic bitterly, resents the Church's actions in the Parnell case. He argues that the Clergy should stay out of politics and says that "we have had too much God in Ireland" (36). Simon Dedalus echoes this argument, calling the Irish "an unfortunate priest ridden race. A priest-ridden Godforsaken race" (35). Richard Ellmann records a factual account about this in James Joyce:

Parnell's death made matters worse by overweighting his tragedy with martyrdom. Joyce has described the Christmas dinner in 1891, when his father and John Kelly raged and wept over Parnell's betrayal and death, and Dante Conway, full of venomous piety, left the table. The argument was so acrimonious that the Vances heard it along the street. Probably the evidence of Ulysses can be trusted that Mrs. Conway left the house for good four days later. A more important after- effect was that for the Joyces, father and son, all was bathos now in Ireland; no politician and no politics were worth working for (34).

This argument which is echoed in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* affects Stephen's consciousness negatively as it does to Joyce's in real life. Because of Irish subservience to Britain, Stephen constantly ponders Ireland's place in the world. He realizes that he, like Joyce in real life, can help his society as a writer "I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can and as wholly as I can, using for my defence the only arms I allow myself to use – silence, exile and cunning" (222).

Stephen realizes his artistic vocation as a result of British political suppression of Ireland just as Marlow gains self-knowledge in *Heart of Darkness* as a result of European suppression of the Africans. Young Stephen during his years of formation found himself put under pressure. He heard about him the constant voices of his father and of his masters, urging him to be a gentleman above all things. Yet another voice had bidden him to be true to his country and help to raise up her fallen language and tradition. But when he grew up he decided to be different by repudiating both voices. "He would create proudly out of the freedom and power of his soul, as the great artificer whose name he bore, a living thing, new and soaring and beautiful, impalpable, imperishable" (184).

In this quest for the new and the beautiful, he has to abandon the artifice called the nation state and all the decayed systems of education, religion and other institutions of the state. Stephen tells Davin: "This race and this country and this life produced me [...] I shall express myself as I am" (220). "My ancestors threw off their language and took another.... They allowed a handful of foreigners to subject them. Do you fancy I am going to pay in my own life and person debts they made? What for?" (220). He ultimately declares his decision: "When the soul of a man is born in this country there are nets flung at it to hold it back from flight. You talk to me of nationality, language, religion. I shall try to fly by those nets" (220). When Davin tells him that a man's country comes first, Stephen asks him: "Do you know what Ireland is? ... Ireland is the old sow that eats her farrow" (220).

In *Heart of Darkness* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* the hypocrisy, cruelty or betrayal generated by political domination serves as an eye opener to Marlow and Stephen respectively. Their experiences are reminiscent of those engendered by the scramble for Africa and the Irish Question which gave rise to political nihilism. The barbaric treatment and killing of thousands of blacks in Africa as well as the infringement of politics into family life and harmony affected the consciousness of Conrad and Joyce respectively. The inclusion of this autobiographical element in their fiction only serves to emphasize the extent of their trauma.

CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, we set out to demonstrate that Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* incorporate autobiographical elements to project the modernist experience. Using the New Historicist literary theory, the comparison of the works of these two authors demonstrates the importance of autobiographical elements in the modernist context and shows that Conrad and Joyce both write of what they both experienced in real life and which impinged on their consciousness to a large extent. The modernist writer is shown as both subject and creator in his work thus bridging the dichotomy between art and life. The key element in their modernist consciousness is nihilism. The trauma comes as a result of the disappointment that life has become meaningless and this hollowness is a result of the rejection of moral values.

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